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ABSTRACT

For the past decade dual-earner marriages in which wives are junior partners have been a major topic in marriage and family literature. In marriages which consider wives as senior partners (WASPs), however, the wife's career is emphasized. In an effort to study the rewards and costs of WASP marriages and to discover the structural conditions under which this pattern exists, male and female married individuals (N=46) participated in interviews to collect data about age, length of marriage, previous marriages, parental status, income, occupation, and work history. Subjects also responded to open-ended questions regarding reactions from others to their marriage, strategies they used to deal with questions or reactions, and their own reactions to the marriage structure. Results indicated that social stress, the husband's feeling of being deprived of wifely services, and the wife's burden as breadwinner were disadvantages of a WASP marriage. However, the wife's achievement and self-esteem and the husband's lack of responsibility and freedom to pursue other interests were overriding advantages. Structural conditions positively affecting the success of WASP marriages were the flexibility of the husband's job, the wife's nontraditional occupation, and an absence of children. (AG)

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WASPs (Wives As Senior Partners)*

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WASPs (Wives As Senior Partners)

ABSTRACT

For the past decade dual-earner marriages have been a major topic in the marriage and family literature. This literature assumes wives to be junior partners in the marriage and their incomes supplemental to that of their husbands'. The present study expands the scope of the literature and challenges extant theory by exploring dual-earner marriages in which the marriage and family life are organized around the wife's job or career rather than the husband's.

The foci of this exploratory study are the rewards and costs of the WASPs marital pattern and the structural conditions under which it exists. One of the greatest costs to both husbands and wives is social stress in that they are perceived as deviant by significant and generalized others. In addition, husbands feel deprived of traditional wifely services and wives feel burdened by the responsibility of being the family breadwinner. WASPs spouses report that the rewards outweight these costs. Wives' greatest reward is occupational achievement and the accompanying self-esteem. Husbands' greatest reward is lack of financial responsibility and the freedom to pursue their own interests. Three structural conditions are congruent with the WASPs marital pattern: flexibility (georgraphic and time restraint) of husbands' jobs, wives engaging in traditional male occupations, and absence of children in the home.

Since the Rapaports' (1969) seminal research on dual career families, the family literature has focused on the concept of parity in marital interaction. Historically in the United States, there has been a gradual shift toward increasing marital equality, largely achieved through women's labor force participation. Typologies such as Scanzoni's (1972) suggest that it is possible for wives to achieve occupational parity with husbands and therefore equal power in their marriages. However, the possibility of wives achieving occupational superiority relative to their husbands is not considered. This paper focuses on marriages in which wives' occupations are considered by the partners to be more important than the husbands', extending Scanzoni's typology to include a fifth marital pattern: wives as senior partners (WASPs).[1]

As women's labor force involvement increased, family sociologists began to study the effect of wives' employment on their families. One important aspect of this literature is the effect of wives' employment on family status. Parsons (1943, 1949) argues that wives' socioeconomic contributions to their families are necessarily minimal for two reasons: marital stability would be threatened by competition between spouses, and status inconsistency between spouses would lead to confusion on the part of the community regarding the status of the family.

Oppenheimer (1977) asserts that Parsons overestimated the deleterious effects of competition between spouses and fails to consider mechanisms by which competition could be prevented or neutralized. She provides a convincing argument that wives may enhance the family's status and, in fact, her ability to do so may be a major predictor of whether or not she works. Oppenheimer,

as opposed to Parsons, focuses on the external status maintainance problems of the family rather than the relationship between partners within the marriage.

While Oppenheimer argues that wives may have an occupation which enhances the status of the family, Parsons argues that wives may work only if that work is insignificant and does not affect family status. They thus disagree on the extent to which wives may participate in the labor force without deleterious effects on the family. Oppenheimer and Parsons disagree on several points; however, on one that is especially germane to this research, they concur. Parsons' theory predicts "intolerable strain" on the marriage if the wife has a superior occupational status, and Oppenheimer (1977:392) agrees: "Given current family norms, this type of status discrepancy is likely to create severe strains in the marriage relationship."

Along with Parsons and Oppenheimer, Becker (1973, 1974, 1977) addresses the issue and predicts negative consequences, equating marriages in which wives have occupational superiority to interracial and interfaith marriages. Safilios-Rothschild (1975, 1976) recognizes the occurrence of wives' occupational superiority and speaks of the "negative overtones" (1975) associated with it. She points out (1976) that black wives often hold higher prestige jobs and are thus defined as social problems by the community.

Paloma's (1972) research indicates that professional women make efforts not to exceed their husbands' achievements, evidently believing that to do so would disrupt their marriages. Hornung and McCullough (1981) predict marital dissatisfaction and increased likelihood of marital dissolution associated with status inconsistency between spouses. They assert that these negative outcomes will be most pronounced in individuals who are greatly concerned with status achievement. Their data support these contentions with some notable exceptions.

"When the women's occupational prestige is higher than the norm, based upon her husband's years of education . . . women find their marriages to be satisfying, while men report that they are dissatisfied with their marriages" (Hornung and McCullough, 1981:139). Hornung, McCullough and Sugimoto (1981:690) apply their theory of status inconsistency to spousal abuse and conclude that "life-threatening acts occur more than six times more often (when the wife has occupational superiority) than when their jobs are compatible." In addition, Urdy's (1981) study of marital alternatives as predictors of marital disruption indicates that the higher the wife's income, the higher her perceptions of alternatives and thus the greater likelihood of marital disruption. This is consistent with Houseknecht and Spanier's (1980) finding that wives' high educational level is associated with high divorce rates.

Despite the consistency of theoretical predictions of negative outcomes and the supportive, though somewhat tangential, research, when the hypothesis (that wife's occupational superiority is positively associated with marital unhappiness) is directly tested, no such negative outcomes occur. Richardson (1979), using NORC data, offers no support for the proposition that marital unhappiness is related to wives' occupational superiority; in fact, his data directly contradict that assumption. When no controls are employed, there is no significant association between wives' occupational prestige levels and marital happiness of husbands or wives. However, when labor-force participation is controlled, "wives higher in occupational prestige and continuous (in labor force participation) compared to wives equal in occupational prestige yet discontinuous in labor force participation, are significantly more happy with their marriages" (Richardson, 1979:69). Richardson argues that the hypothesis receives no support because a social psychological consequence

(marital unhappiness) is derived a priori from a structural arrangement. He also suggests that the necessity of male occupational superiority is a myth consistent with widely held gender role orientations. There are, of course, alternative explanations. Safilios-Rothschild (1976) suggests that income may be more salient than occupational prestige.

Neither extant theory nor empirical research have adequately addressed the issue of wives' occupational superiority. Most previous research on wives' employment contrasts employed and unemployed women or discusses dual earner or dual career marriages. Indeed, Papanek's (1973) "two person single career" concept should be unclear, but Papanek is able to communicate clearly with this ambiguous term because researchers assume that the single career necessarily belongs to the husband. Assuming husband's occupational superiority is questionable given available data. Haug (1973) demonstrates that wives in about one third of all dual work families have a higher social class than their husbands. Oppenheimer's (1977) data indicate that from 4% to 30% of wives have a higher occupational status than their husbands. Data from the 1978 Census indicate that one third of all working wives earn as much or more than their husbands. Clearly the consequences of wives' occupational superiority need to be addressed.

Richardson (1979), Hornung and McCullough (1981) and Hornung, McCullough and Segimoto (1981)[2] take necessary initial steps toward an understanding of the impact of wives' occupational superiority on the family, but the studies are limited. They assume that occupational prestige is the most important, if not sole, determinant of occupational superiority; the effect of income is both unknown and uncontrolled. Second, these studies neglect

couple definitions of occupational superiority that are as important, if not more so, than structural definitions such as occupational prestige. Couple definitions of the situation, i.e. whose career is more important, may or may not be congruent with societal (and sociological) definitions and expectations. Factors other than occupational prestige which may influence couples' definitions include income, life cycle stage, and individual motivation.

This research contributes to the understanding of marital dynamics in the WASP marital pattern by including in the sample only couples that define themselves as WASPs. Our inquiry has two foci: (1) to discover the rewards and costs of this pattern for marital partners; and (2) to discover the structural conditions under which the pattern exists. In addition, we address such issues as division of labor, social stress, and adaptive behaviors.

We define WASPs as those who emphasize the wife's career rather than the husband's. Operationally, our definition includes marriages in which respondents agree that the marriage is wife-emphasized, state that they would relocate to further the wife's career, that they would be more likely to relocate for wife's career than for the husband's, and that their marriage and family life is organized around the wife's rather than the husband's career. Only those couples that fit all the above criteria are included in the sample. This definition is intentionally restricted to insure that findings are relevant to the marital pattern of interest.

SAMPLE

Our sample includes 46 married individuals including 26 wives, 20 husbands, and 31 different marriages. Both husbands and wives were interviewed in the

case of 15 marriages and either the husband or wife was interviewed in the remaining 16 marriages. The nature of our research problem precludes random selection. Sample members were chosen on the basis of availability. In some instances the respondents were known by the researchers, but in most cases the respondents were referred by others. Respondents completed an intensive interview that varied in length from forty-five minutes to two and one-half hours. No one who was asked refused to be interviewed. Husbands and wives were interviewed separately. Respondents range in age from 24 to 71 with a mean age for wives of 41 and for husbands, 45. Forty-three respondents are white; three are black. Length of marriage varies from one year to 36 years with an average of 12.5 years. Thirty-five percent of the couples have been married 10 years or longer. Fifty-four percent of the wives and 35% of the husbands have been previously married. Thirty-eight percent of the couples have a child or stepchild living with them.

MEASURES

In addition to age, length of marriage, notation of previous marriage, and parental status, respondents were also asked to supply income, occupational status and brief work histories. Respondents were asked a number of open-ended questions, including reactions to their relationship from friends, family and co-workers as well as strategies used to handle questions or reactions. They were asked at two different points in the interview for advantages and disadvantages of their marital pattern for themselves, their spouses, and their children. They discussed problem areas in their marriage and were probed to identify problems in seven different areas. In addition, respondents recounted special efforts to please their spouses because of their special marriage.

FINDINGS

Occupation and Income

Wives' jobs range from legal secretary to physician. The average occupational status of wives is the second highest status category on the Hollingshead scale (1957). The occupational status of husbands is significantly lower than that of wives. Their jobs range from part-time cab driver to college professor. The average occupation of husbands is two categories lower on the Hollingshead scale than that of wives. About one third of the husbands and wives have similar occupational statuses. In only one instance does a husband have a higher occupational status than the wife--a college professor married to a fashion designer. This case is the only instance of a husband's occupational prestige being in the highest status category while 50% of the wives are in the highest prestige grouping.

Most of the wives are not pursuing occupations that are defined as typically female. Almost half are in the professions: eleven are college professors, two are physicians, and two are ministers. Several are in business: one is a traveling salesperson, one is a general superintendent for General Motors, and four have their own small businesses. Two are politicians, and one is a news correspondent for a national network.

Wives also earn more money than their husbands. Their income averages between $15,000 to $24,999; whereas, husbands' income averages between $10,000 to $14,999. Family income averages between $25,000 to $34,999. In no case does a husband earn more than his wife. Wives work longer hours than their spouses. Wives report they work an average of 51.5 hours per week, and husbands report a similar 51.6 hours a week for their wives. Husbands

work an average of 33 hours as reported by their wives, and 37 hours as reported by themselves.

Husbands' jobs are quite flexible. For example, one is a self-employed graphic artist, two are self-employed lawyers, and one sells real estate. One husband is a self-employed accountant, three are entertainers, and one is a general contractor. Two husbands are physically disabled and one is retired. Forty-two percent of the husbands are self-employed. One husband works for Public Interest Groups and has just finished a full-time job organizing the ERA campaign in his state. He is presently caring for the couple's two children. One of the entertainers also cares for his step-children when not working. One husband recently resigned a high paying job with IBM to become a small farmer and raise chickens. He and his wife relocated so she could set up a small business.

Costs

We anticipated that a major cost of this marital pattern would be social stress from being perceived as deviant by significant others. We asked our respondents if they were perceived as unique and how friends, family, co-workers and others reacted. Reported reactions range from admiration to puzzlement to pity. Some respondents report that all conversation simply ceases when new acquaintances discover their occupations. The majority of reported reactions are quite negative. Husbands are considered losers, lazy, irresponsible, and unmasculine. One father said of his son, who was relocating for his wife's career: "If he were any kind of man he wouldn't be following her like that." Wives are seen as "unladylike," domineering and manipulative. One comment addressed to the husband of an office manager was "Does she manage you too?" A wife was asked "What kind of drugs do you give him anyhow?"

A young woman said to her older female colleague: "I'd rather die than end up like you."

The majority of the couples confirm that they are viewed as deviant by friends, family, and co-workers, resulting in considerable social stress. Wives are more likely than husbands to recall negative comments, slights, and derogatory statements. This is not surprising because these wives are more actively engaged in the work world than are the husbands. Also, women may be more perceptive of the nuances of social relationships than are men (Henley, 1977).

In response to this social stress, the couples have acquired adaptive behaviors. The wives are often quite defensive of their husbands, extolling their husbands' accomplishments, talents, and contributions. The wife of an entertainer says she simply lies and says her husband has a job when he is, in fact, out of work. Husbands rarely discuss their own or their spouses' occupations. One wife said, "It's like an embarrassing secret."

Humor is a favorite strategy. The husband of a physician employed by the Red Cross says, "My wife collects more blood in one day than Dracula did in his whole career." Respondents also report less social interaction than their more traditional peers and colleagues because of their marital pattern. A husband reported that he quit a country club because the other wives did not accept his wife and only wanted to complain about their maids. A wife said she lacked time for a social life and "besides, I have nothing to say to my old girlfriends. We have nothing in common." As anticipated, one of the primary social costs of the WASP marital pattern is that both partners are perceived as deviant by significant others. Most respondents developed adaptive behaviors designed to minimize these costs.

The perceptions of others constitute costs for couples involved in WASP marriages, but there are other costs as well. Respondents were asked for advantages and disadvantages associated with this marital pattern for themselves, their spouses, and their children. Wives cite having the responsibility for financial support of the family, being tired, having their husband suffer in comparison, guilt over not being a "good wife," and lack of time to spend with spouse and children as major costs. For example, when one wife with a young daughter was asked for disadvantages, she replied:

> Oh the long hours, being tired... I could not always do things with her, like school things. Once she wanted me to go to a program at school that she was in. I couldn't go and she cried. I still feel bad about that.

Husbands cite their own career sacrifices (lack of mobility and prestige) along with wife's time away from home as major costs.

Rewards

Respondents cite many more rewards than costs. Wives report opportunities to pursue a career, financial gain, independence, self-esteem, more freedom from household chores, having the emotional support of husbands, time for fathers to spend with children, resources for children, and teaching children gender role flexibility as major rewards. For example:

> I hope my sons have learned to see women as individuals instead of extensions of themselves. I think I show her (daughter) that a woman can do things. I don't want my girl taking a back seat to a man. I know women who have stayed home with their husbands because they were afraid to leave--go out on their own. Those women are trapped--like slaves. I don't want that kind of life for my girl. If she's going to live with a man it's going to be because she wants to.

Husbands also cite more rewards than costs. Being relieved of the responsibility for support and having the freedom and resources to pursue their own interests are most often cited. An attorney replies:

> Her job has allowed me to pick and choose cases. I only handle cases in my area of specialization. Most lawyers have to take cases they don't find interesting or challenging.

A businessman says:

> _____'s job has enabled me to build a business, and now that we've sold it, I can be free to manage our property ... I can do almost anything. I have more autonomy.

Husbands also report that their wives help them in their businesses with an exchange of ideas and with business contacts. They report that they enjoy seeing their wives happy and take pride in her accomplishments. Husbands report enjoying having time to spend with children, having a wife who keeps herself attractive, and not having an emotionally dependent wife. One husband responds:

> I don't think I could live with a woman who stayed home. She (present wife) is less of an emotional strain. I can't imagine a traditional marriage, those women seem to be treading water. I couldn't deal with that.

Husbands as well as wives find their lifestyle rewarding because their children learn gender role flexibility. A father of sons and a daughter responds:

> It is important for them to see that a woman can work--good for them to see that the traditional role is not inevitable.

Problems

In addition to the specific costs and rewards associated with the WASP marital pattern, we also sought to identify other problem areas that might

be shared by more traditional couples. When asked to discuss the three major problems in their marriage, respondents most often list finances. Respondents were also questioned about problems in selected areas: friends, family, finances, children, religion, neighbors, and co-workers. Wives and husbands most often reported that they have or have had problems in their marriage with friends (61.5% of the wives, 70% of the husbands), finances (65.4% of the wives, 60% of the husbands), and children (38.5% of the wives and 40% of the husbands who have children or stepchildren). These findings are similar to those of Scanzoni (1970) who found that problems with finances, children and friends were most often reported. However, our findings indicate a greater friction with friends than was found in Scanzoni's sample. Several of the wives in this sample complain that their husband's friends were "bums" or "dilettantes." Husbands report that their friends considered their wives to be threatening.

Net Profit

It is difficult to judge the net profit associated with this marital pattern, but respondents were asked to rate the overall happiness of their marriages, and to estimate how likely they are to remain in the marriage. Husbands rate themselves happier in their marriages than wives: 50% of the husbands and 38.5% of the wives say they are very happy, and 45% of the husbands and 38.5% of the wives are somewhat happy. These ratings are lower than those from national surveys (Glenn and Weaver, 1978). Given the social desirability set (Sudman and Bradburn, 1974) and thus the over-reporting of marital happiness, in addition to the correlation between conventionality and reported marital adjustment (Edmonds, et al., 1972), it may simply be that these unconventional respondents are more honest in their evaluations of their marriage.

When asked how likely respondents are to remain in this marriage, 95% of the husbands and 88.5% of the wives replied that they are very likely to stay in the marriage. Only one husband and one wife say they are not very likely to continue in the marriage. In summary, although these couples report somewhat less marital happiness than national samples, given the high cost of this marital pattern, they report surprisingly high marital happiness and desire to continue the marriages.

Idiosyncratic Credit

We anticipated that because of the costs involved in this marital pattern wives would attempt to build up idiosyncratic credit (Hollander, 1964), i.e. performance in one role to make up for lack of performance in another. Respondents were asked if they do anything special for their spouse because of their WASP marriage. Seventy-three percent of the wives and 70% of the husbands agree that wives do special things for husbands because of this marital pattern. Wives respond that they make special attempts to be attractive to their husbands, to be sexually available, to arrange romantic occasions, and to cater to their husbands. A dancer and studio owner says "I always try out my most exotic and erotic costumes on _____. My best dancing is for him." Another wife responds "Yes, I always try to fix a nice dinner and dress up--I have wine and candles on the table--real romantic." A college professor says "I cater to his every whim. I feel guilty and try to salve his male ego." The husbands agree. For example: "_____ always looks great; is always glad to see me when I get home." A physician's husband says "_____ caters to my whims--which are legion. I require a certain amount of catering. I would be

happy for her if she were head of Johns Hopkins (Medical School) if my needs were met." Wives appear to emphasize some aspects of their traditional female role as much as possible to make up for their participation in a traditional male role.

We did not anticipate that husbands might also try to build idiosyncratic credit, but 69.2% of the wives and 55.0% of the husbands say that husbands do special things for the wife because they have a WASP marriage. Husbands help their wives with their jobs, buy presents, and do more household chores. "I try to help out if she has a project going--help collate, help set up demonstrations, take pictures." A husband who sometimes works in his wife's business says "I try to keep things from worrying her. I try to manage the day-to-day so she can be creative." Another says, "I always bring _____ presents—sometimes it's stuff to wear, but she likes things for the house more."

When wives' careers are emphasized rather than husbands', as Oppenheimer (1977) suggests, there are mechanisms which may reduce strain between spouses as a result of status inconsistency. We found that spouses reduce strain by compensating for their failures to meet traditional role expectations by accruing idiosyncratic credits. Both husbands and wives gain idiosyncratic credit with their respective spouses by engaging in typical female gender role behaviors. Wives emphasize their role as sexual partners and also give emotional support to their husbands/pursuits, interests, and hobbies. Husbands expend much time performing household tasks and giving emotional support to their wives' career endeavors.

Division of Labor

A more equitable division of labor is one way husbands gain idiosyncratic credit. We asked respondents who has responsibility for the following 15 tasks:

child care, shopping, cleaning, cooking, car maintenance, household repair, disciplining children, handling finances, laundry, yardwork and gardening, caring for pets, major purchases, major decisions, social contacts, and correspondence. The division of labor within these "spheres of influence" (Scanzoni, 1979) is traditional. Both husbands and wives say that wives are more likely to be responsible for shopping, cleaning, cooking and laundry. They agree that husbands are responsible for car maintenance, household repair, and yardwork. Both agree that they equally share discipline of children, caring for pets, making major purchases and major decisions. Wives claim responsibility for child care and social contacts while husbands say these are equally shared. However, wives say they equally share handling of finances, and husbands say wives are responsible for this chore. These differences are the result of aggregate scores of husbands and wives. When only husbands and wives who are married to each other are compared, slightly different conclusions are drawn.

A disagreement score was constructed for each couple based upon a five point scale with higher scores indicating husband's responsibility and lower scores indicating wife's responsibility. The husband's responses are subtracted from the wife's, and their differences averaged for the fifteen tasks. Their average disagreement is -1.7, indicating that wives claim slightly more responsibility than their husbands agree they have. More couples disagree on who does the cooking and who handles finances than on any other item. Wives claim more responsibility for these tasks than husbands agree they have. A composite disagreement score for couples was computed to measure overall couple disagreement. When this composite score is compared to the total amount

of disagreement possible, the composite score is only 3% of the total possible disagreement, indicating that there is a great deal of agreement concerning these spheres of influence among WASP wives and husbands.

Discerning which marital partner is responsible for which tasks is important in that we can identify spheres of influence in the household. It is perhaps just as important to know how much time husbands and wives spend on household responsibilities, because that time cannot be devoted to career pursuits. One of the disadvantages women face in career development is lack of time to expend in their careers due to their heavy household responsibilities (Heckman, et al., 1977; Poloma, et al., 1981). There are two alternatives that can free time from these responsibilities—either less total time can be expended by the wife, or someone else other than the wife can expend time on household tasks. To ascertain how much time wives and husbands spend on chores, respondents were asked how many hours a week they and their spouses spend doing chores. On the average, wives say that they spend 13 hours a week and that their husbands spend 11 hours a week doing chores. Husbands report that they spend 16.3 hours and that their wives spend 14.3 hours a week on chores. When only those husbands and wives who are married to each other are compared, the results are somewhat different. Wives say that they spend 14.3 hours, and that their husbands spend 11.2 hours a week doing chores. Husbands say their wives spend 12.9 hours and that they spend 12.7 hours a week doing chores. Thus, wives say they spend about three more hours a week doing chores than their husbands and husbands say they spend an equal amount of time doing chores as their wives. Overall, there is a great deal of agreement on time spent on chores; 73% of the couples

agree on which spouse spends more time doing chores. Fifty-three percent agree the wife spends more time and 27% agree the husband spends more time on chores. Of the 27% of the couples who disagree, 13% of the wives say they do more and 13% of the husbands say the time spent is equal; 13% of the husbands say they do more and 13% of the wives say the time spent is equal. These results indicate that although on the average wives may spend slightly more time than their husbands on chores, this differential is not great. Although slightly more than half of the couples in which both husbands and wives were interviewed agree that wives spend more time than husbands, close to one-third agree that husbands spend more time than wives on household chores. Husbands in WASP marriages appear to do more household chores than husbands with unemployed wives or husbands in dual career marriages (see Araji, 1977; Condran and Bode, 1982; Cook, 1975; Model, 1981; Scanzoni and Fox, 1980; and Yogev, 1983).

Although the spheres of influence are traditional, this is not to say that husbands do not perform any traditional female tasks, but rather that wives retain major responsibility for them. Husbands and wives strongly concur in their assessment of both spheres of influence and time spent on household chores, lending validity to individual assessments.

WASP husbands gain idiosyncratic credit for their performance of traditional female tasks. Wives are grateful for the time husbands spend relieving them from time-consuming household chores even though wives retain responsibility for their completion. Given the general expectation among most American women that husbands will perform few if any household tasks, the fact that WASP husbands spend almost as much time as their wives on these tasks lead the wives to express gratitude to their husbands, not only for doing

the physical work but for the emotional support this work symbolizes. Husbands thereby gain idiosyncratic credit for household chores which helps to offset their lack of performance in the breadwinner role.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

As a result of several structural and social psychological changes in American society, we can expect the WASP marital type to increase in frequency in the coming years. Our study is the first empirical investigation of the marital dynamics in this type of marriage. In this paper we have focused on two aspects: rewards and costs and the structural factors that may account for this type of marriage.

Wives and husbands in WASP marriages report both rewards and costs, but for them the former outweigh the latter. Reported costs are consistent with the negative expectations previously stated by Safilios-Rothschild (1975). WASP spouses are exposed to greater social stress in that they are perceived as deviant by significant and generalized others. Both husbands and wives report that wives' lack of performance in some aspects of the wife's traditional role is costly. Husbands feel deprived of traditional services, and wives feel guilty for this deprivation. There are also costs to children in lost time with their mothers.[3] In addition, the responsibility of being the family breadwinner wears heavily on the majority of the wives in our sample.

Wives report that their biggest reward is occupational achievement and the accompanying self-esteem. Husbands say that lack of financial responsibility and the freedom to pursue their own interests are their greatest rewards. Both wives and husbands value the time husbands spend with their children and believe that their children benefit from the flexible gender role models they provide for them.

There are several structural conditions under which spouses appear more likely to modify the traditional normative marital role expectations and adopt the WASP pattern. When husbands have flexible jobs in terms of both locality and time restraints, the couple can more readily afford to emphasize the wife's career without totally disrupting the husband's. The key question then becomes antecedence. Was the husband's job originally flexible or is his job an accommodation to his wife's career demands? Our data suggest that it is more often the former. In 58% of the marriages, couples knew at the point of their marriage that the wife's career would be emphasized. Husbands and wives appear to have entered the marriages with previously defined expectations and chose partners with similar expectations. However, in other instances, the marital pattern evolved to accommodate the changing needs of the marital partners. For example, when one career military officer retired, his wife returned to college and obtained her Ph.D. In other cases, husbands became disenchanted with their careers as their wives became more career oriented.

A second condition under which this marital pattern appears more likely is when women hold traditional male occupations. Traditionally, male occupations pay better salaries than female occupations; thus women in male occupations are free to choose husbands for other than economic reasons. Husbands are relieved from the burden of financial support and are free to pursue their interests in more flexible but riskier and less remunerative endeavors.

A third structural condition is the absence of children, especially infants, in the home. Research documents the burden that child rearing places on wives. The time and energy demands of child rearing constrain working wives and often result in limitations placed on wives' careers (Boulding, 1976; Coser and Rokoff, 1982; Poloma, et al., 1972). Only 35.5% of our

marriages have children in the home, and only 22.6% have children under twelve. Relieved of the burden of child rearing, wives are free to pursue career interests.

This research indicates that although there are costs associated with wives' occupational superiority, there are structural conditions under which "wives as senior partners" is a rewarding marital pattern. Extant theory's negative assessment is only given limited support. As Scanzoni (1979) and McDonald (1981) suggest, marital role orientations have shifted from "fully structured" to "partially structured." Husband and wife roles are now less rigidly defined and are more open to negotiation than in the past. Traditional marital role expectations may be reevaluated when the couple perceives an alternative pattern which is more likely to provide maximum joint profit than the pattern currently followed.

FOOTNOTES

1. Scanzoni's (1972) description of the marital pattern in which husbands are "senior partners" and wives are "junior partners" focuses on the husband's role as breadwinner and the wife's role as supplementary provider of income.
2. This research utilizes examples from the U.S.A. Safilios-Rothschild and Dijkers (1978) study the effects of wives' superiority using a Greek sample and find that social class determines the way superiority is handled. In the lower social classes, husbands tend to compensate by managing their wives' money and restricting their behavior. In the higher social classes, husbands appear not to perceive effects of superiority and pool income to mask their wives' superiority.
3. We are not assuming that WASP mothers spend less time with their children than do more traditional mothers. Not having enough time to spend with family is a common complaint of both professional and nonprofessional women (Piotrkowski, et al., 1981).

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